

Chuckwalla Chatter



**The Desert Outdoor Center
Maricopa County**

Volume 5, Issue 2

What's Up Dock?

By Natalie Harper

Bugs Bunny may not be visiting the Desert Outdoor Center (DOC) any time soon, but plans for a new boathouse and dock in Honeymoon Cove are well underway. Since May 2004, the staff of the DOC has been working in partnership with the Boy Scouts of America to design a facility intended for aquatic education and activities. The proposed 80' x 40' boathouse will be completely covered and include a spacious deck, two protected boat slips, and a large 40' x 40' storage building for watercraft, aquatic equipment and supplies.

The new facility will feature an instructional platform for aquatic classes, as well as store equipment securely and minimize preparation time during training periods. First aid equipment can also be readily



Honeymoon Cove is the site for the new boathouse and dock planned for the DOC aquatic programs. J.J. Gerlitz photo

accessed in case of a medical emergency and a lifeguard platform will be provided for the safety of all participants.

The boathouse will be in the northeastern inlet of Honeymoon Cove, and easily reached by staff mem-

bers yet protected from unwarranted usage. The Parks and Recreation Department Trails Crew has plans to construct a new trail extending from the east dormitory to the waterfront (see Story on page 4). The boathouse will be anchored with a sophisticated system of cables that allow the structure to be moved to various locations in the cove to adapt to the fluctuating lake levels throughout the year.

In addition to the aquatic merit badge courses that were offered to Boy Scouts during the 2005 Aquatic and Nature Camp at Lake Pleasant (see Story on page 3), the DOC staff plans to develop boating safety programs for the general public as well. The boathouse is scheduled to be completed by Summer 2006.

The DOC's New Aquatic Directors by Terri Martzke

DOC Interpretive Rangers, Natalie Harper and Adam Melle, temporarily traded in their ranger hats for swim caps to become the new Aquatic Directors for the Desert Outdoor Center Aquatics Education Program. They attended a week-long training camp at the Boy Scout's Camp Geronimo near Payson in mid-May. At camp, not only did they learn canoeing, kayaking, and rowing instruction, but they had to

undergo rigorous swim tests and lifeguard training in the cool northern Arizona waters.

Once their instruction was complete, they returned to the desert to use their newfound skills in implementing the DOC's first Boy Scout Aquatic and Nature Camp. The DOC's Aquatic Education Program is the only Boy Scout aquatic camp located in the Valley.

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A Word from the Park Supervisor

DIVERSIFYING THE DESERT OUT-DOOR CENTER

Since its construction in 1998 the DOC has served about 120,000 people throughout Maricopa County and beyond with an outstanding environmental education curriculum, and an unmatched venue for retreats and conferences. Given its proximity to the shores of Honeymoon Cove on Lake Pleasant, a natural question has always been, "Why not develop a first-class aquatics program?"

As you will glean from this newsletter, that endeavor is now in progress. A partnership with the Grand Canyon Council of the Boy Scouts of America has paved the way for development of the facilities and instructors to diversify public educational opportunities at the

DOC. The first couple years will focus on use of the facility and equipment for Boy Scout Merit Badge classes. Various types of water craft and a boat-house for storage will be purchased, as well as a boat dock. All this, along with expert aquatics instruction from the DOC's Interpretive Rangers will be available in about 2007 for use by the general public.

The DOC received a State Lake Improvement Fund grant for some of the improvements. In making our presentation to the Arizona Outdoor Recreation Coordinating Commission, the entity that approves proposed SLIF projects, we emphasized the importance of education in reducing boating accidents on Arizona's waterways.

According to the Arizona Game and Fish Department, more than half of the

operators involved in recreational boating accidents had not received formal education in boating safety. Young people, ages 15-30, were involved in 38% of all boating accidents. Also, 63% of all boating accidents were blamed on operator inexperience.

We believe our aquatics education program will make a difference on Arizona's lakes and large rivers, improving boating safety first among Boy Scouts who become involved with this recreational activity, and soon thereafter among the general public who choose to take advantage of this opportunity.

- Rich Glinski
Park Supervisor

Update on the Ethnobotany Garden by Adam Melle



The Ethnobotanical Garden is reaching completion. The final order of 20 native Sonoran desert plants has been received and planted into different sections of the garden. In these sections are plants once gathered by Native Americans for a variety of purposes including food, medicine, and fiber. The fourth section is an agricul-

tural display that was recently finished. This 250 square foot plot of land demonstrates the irrigation style techniques used by native people for farming purposes. The first crop will be planted in late September with plants that will include lentil, onion, and wheat.

The next phase of this garden will include interpretive signage made possible by a second Central Arizona Project (CAP) grant application. Yet to be installed is a drip system and rock surface with a flagstone pathway.

Special thanks to CAP for funding this grant related program, to Mountain States Nursery for donating the garden plants, and the

Friends of the Desert Outdoor Center for helping to make this garden possible.



DOC Hosts First Annual Boy Scout Aquatic and Nature Camp by Terri Martzke

In partnership with the Boy Scouts of America, the Desert Outdoor Center kicked off its first Boy Scout Aquatic and Nature Camp. From June 6th to June 30th, approximately 232 Scouts from the Grand Canyon Council came to the DOC for one-week sessions to earn merit badges and learn new skills. The DOC staff teamed up with AZ Game and Fish boating instructors and Boy Scout staff and volunteers to instruct the Scouts in an array of topics including: canoeing, waterskiing, row boating, motor boating, kayaking, sailing, fishing, fly fishing, weather, nature, environmental science, soil and water conservation, mammals, bird study, insect study, wildlife management, and reptiles and amphibian study. The DOC Interpretive Rangers developed curriculum for these classes which will later be incorporated in other programs.

Various steps were taken to transform this award-winning educa-



At camp, Boy Scouts learned proper canoeing techniques.

tional facility into an official Boy Scout Camp. Honeymoon Cove was converted from a sleepy fishing nook to an aquatics center. A temporary dock was borrowed and towed in from Lake Pleasant Regional Park and anchored to the shore. The West Dorm substituted as equipment storage and a changing area for the Scouts. The classroom became a scout staff meeting place and the exhibit hall stored teaching materials.

Even the gift shop was temporarily re-dubbed "The Outpost," according to a term Scouts frequently use at other camps. Kayaks, sailboats, rowboats and powerboats were provided by Boy Scouts while Game and Fish supplied the canoes and fishing gear.

Deemed a success by attendees and staff alike, the DOC will continue offering more Boy Scout Aquatic and Nature camps in the future. Plans are in the works for a permanent dock and boathouse (see Story, page 1) as well as a new trail to the water's edge. (See Story, page 4)



A temporary dock served the newly established Aquatic and Nature Camp.

New Animals in the Exhibit Hall by Terri Martzke

Creepy crawlies are moving in and creepy crawlies are moving out. Things are certainly on the move in the Exhibit Hall. In June, our Speckled Rattlesnakes, Blacktail Rattlesnakes, Great Basin Rattlesnake, Tiger Rattlesnake and Western Diamondback Rattlesnake were transferred to the Phoenix Herpetological Society for placement at other facilities and zoos.

Their vacancies made room for a wider variety of desert animals to be displayed at the DOC, giving visitors an opportunity to

view even more unique creatures. In their place now resides a Desert Spiny Lizard named Spike and Bailey, the Desert Pocket Mouse (our only mammal representative). Soon to join them will be a California Kingsnake named Oscar, a Rosy Boa, a Giant Hairy Scorpion and a centipede. The transfer has also allowed Grumpy, the Desert Tortoise, to enjoy more walking room in a larger enclosure and Alice the Gopher Snake a longer area to stretch out.

The Desert Spiny Lizard is a medium sized lizard with rough spiny scales, bright patches of color and a dragon-like appearance.



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New Trail Planned to Water's Edge by John Capes

The DOC will soon have a new trail to link the facility directly to the shores of Lake Pleasant. The trail-head will begin near the new ethnobotany garden and connect to the newly proposed boat house and dock, which will be located on the northeast shore of Honeymoon Cove. The "Boathouse Trail" will be aligned by the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Trails Crew and will be a Primary Trail, with a

width of approximately four feet, a maximum grade of 10% and a surface consisting of native soil. This type of trail will minimize disturbance to the environment yet enable all individuals to utilize it. The DOC has a golf cart to assist any visitors with special needs.

The combination of slope, soil type, and the presence of large rocks will require the Trails Crew to perform

the majority of the construction. In addition, Boy Scouts and Eagle Scouts have volunteered to assist them. Special care will be taken to minimize the presence of loose soil that could erode and run off into the lake. The Boathouse Trail is slated to begin this winter and should be completed by late winter or early spring.

Come Join Us at our Harvest Moon Event by Chris Simpson

On Saturday, September 17, the Desert Outdoor Center will open the gate to the general public to enjoy a combined Harvest Moon Festival and Stargazing event of adventure and discovery.

This fun-filled evening will kick off with the Harvest Moon Festival at 6:00pm. Some of the festival's activities include: Asteroid Toss, puzzles, making 3-D glasses, games, movies and more. In addition, refreshments will be served and the Exhibit Hall will be open for guests to visit our animals.

Then at 7:00pm, Tony LaConte from Stargazing For Everyone will start his stargazing program. He will explain the significance of the Harvest Moon as well as other fascinating tidbits about space and stars. He and his astronomy group will have telescopes set up for viewing. The public is also encouraged to bring their own binoculars, family telescopes, or camera as well as blankets or chairs.

The admission is \$5 per vehicle for an evening of enjoyment for all ages. Hope to see you there!



2005 Stargazing

Schedule for the DOC:

- Saturday, Sept. 17, 7:00pm Harvest Moon Festival 6pm

- Saturday, Nov. 19, 7:00pm

For more information on times or dates for other locations, contact Tony & Carole La Conte at 623-979-1393 or visit:

www.stargazingforeveryone.com

The Desert Outdoor Center at Lake Pleasant (DOC) is dedicated to providing an interactive educational experience in a distinctive facility staffed by experienced educators. It provides learners an opportunity to become immersed in an inspirational setting that instills a respect for the natural environment.

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